



AOT in Action

Welcome to AOT in Action, your weekly e-newsletter from the Arizona Office of Tourism (AOT).

A Message from the Director:

Good morning,

Welcome to the new *AOT in Action*!

For five years, our weekly e-newsletter has been the information resource for Arizona's tourism industry. However, as the saying goes, "with age comes wisdom," and through the years we found we could make some improvements. In order to continue being a great resource that will prepare you for what's in store for 2009; we've made a few upgrades to the newsletter ensuring more details on the latest agency opportunities and industry news.

Also, we've included an exciting new addition to *AOT in Action*. We will be presenting weekly profiles on an Arizona destination, festival, event or tourism-related professional to highlight the vibrant variety of people, places and activities that make up our dynamic industry.

I hope you enjoy the new *AOT in Action*!

I look forward to working with you throughout the New Year as we market amazing Arizona experiences. On behalf of the entire staff at the Arizona Office of Tourism, I wish all of you a prosperous 2009!

Have a great week.

Margie A. Emmermann
Director
Arizona Office of Tourism

AOT News

Love is in the Arizona Air

The Arizona Office of Tourism will be promoting the passionate side of Arizona, January 1 – February 28, 2009. Travel partners can post tourism-related “romantic” specials, discounts and packages that are valid during this time. AOT will be touting the Grand Canyon State as a romantic destination by highlighting Arizona’s fine food, wonderful wines, world-class accommodations, and rejuvenating spas, along with the state’s gorgeous sunsets, lush desert landscapes, scenic mountains, and starry skies. Offers can include romantic accommodation packages, tours to romantic areas, a vacation that will rekindle the romance, etc.

To participate, submit your offers visit the [Travel Deals](#) section of www.azot.gov. Once you begin adding your travel deal, be sure to select the special promotion “Love is in the Arizona Air.” If you need additional assistance, please contact Marjorie Magnusson at 602-364-3695 or via e-mail at mmagnusson@azot.gov.

Fiesta Bowl Festival of College Football

Are you ready for some *college* football?

For nearly 40 years, the Fiesta Bowl Festival of College Football organization has done what it set out to do, “to remain a source of pride for all Arizonans by contributing strongly to the state’s economic development, tourism and community causes.”



Since 1971, the Festival of College Football, which includes Fiesta Bowl, the Insight Bowl, the rotating BCS Championship football game, and many event related activities held throughout the state, has generated an economic impact of more than \$2.2 billion to the state’s economy. Additionally, this organization has introduced Arizona as a travel destination to thousands of sports fans who otherwise would never have visited the Grand Canyon State.

Each year dedicated college sports fans travel to Arizona to experience everything from festive pre-game parades and tailgating parties to exhilarating last minute touchdowns, game-winning field goals and stunning upsets.

And while these fans are here, the Arizona Office of Tourism does what it can to encourage each of these visitors to discover that our state is more than just good weather for an exciting football game. It’s a destination filled with outdoor adventures, fine dining and shopping, relaxing spas, lush desert landscape, and breathtaking mountain vistas.

“Sporting events and tourism often work in support of each other,” said Margie A. Emmermann, director of the Arizona Office of Tourism. “Events such as the Fiesta Bowl, P.F. Chang’s Rock ‘n Roll Arizona Marathon and the Cactus League bring a tremendous amount of visitors to Arizona and the economic benefits often can be felt throughout the entire state. As a sponsor of these events, AOT’s goal is to encourage these visitors to extend their stay in the Grand Canyon State and explore more of what we have to offer.”

Fiesta Bowl Game Day Information

Date: January 5, 2009
Kick Off: 6:00 p.m.
Match Up: Ohio State vs. Texas
TV: FOX Sports

Map and Parking: [Click here](#)

AOT Events

AOT to Conduct Sales Mission in Mexico

Mexico is one of Arizona's most important international markets. To further increase awareness of the Grand Canyon State, the Arizona Office of Tourism will coordinate a sales mission to Mexico in February 2009 and we would like to invite you to participate. Each year, AOT coordinates a sales mission to reach out to the second tier cities in Mexico – cities that are not typically reached through our other promotions. This year we will target Puebla, Queretaro and Leon during a five-day mission scheduled for the week of February 23 – 27, 2009. We will host breakfast seminars in each city and invite local travel agents and tour operators to attend. Additionally we will coordinate small media luncheons with two – four journalists in each city.

For additional information and to obtain a participation form, please contact Loretta Belonio at lbeldonio@azot.gov or 602-364-3725.

Upcoming Events

Event - American Bus Association (ABA) Marketplace

Date - January 7-12, 2009
Location - Charlotte, North Carolina

Event - Canada Sales and Media Mission

Date - January 19-23, 2009
Location - Toronto, Calgary and Vancouver

Event -Seattle Sales Mission

Date - January 25-29
Location - Seattle, Washington

Industry News

Survey: Travelers Won't Stay Home Despite Lots of Uncertainty

As travel gurus try to forecast what's going to happen in 2009, only one word is clear: uncertainty. That's no surprise, says the [Chicago Tribune](#), given all the "ifs" in the recession-mired economy. If credit starts to flow, if the housing market stabilizes, if the Big Three automakers get their act together, if the stock market transitions from bear to bull ... not to mention the soaring jobless rate. On the bright side, the national average for gas at the pump has fallen below \$2 a gallon. Yes, millions of Americans are going to take vacations next year. They

are going to fly, cruise and drive, but I'll guarantee you: Travelers will not be tossing their money around. "Consumers are responding as we might expect" in troubled times, said Suzanne Cook, research vice president for the Travel Industry Association, which represents all parts of the \$740 billion U.S. industry. But travel should be seen as part of the solution to the economic woes, she said. "There's no doubt that if we can spur travel, we can help turn the economy around." (Note that the leisure and hospitality industry has lost 1.3 million jobs this year.) Cook said her forecast, based on interviews with 2,291 adults in October, shows only a 1.3 percent decline in leisure travel next year from this year. The survey, conducted by TIA and Ypartnership, a marketing firm, said that 7 out of 10 respondents said they intend to take an overnight trip of 50 miles or more in the next six months. Nearly half of those surveyed said they did not plan to change their future travel plans because of the financial turmoil.

Study: Social Media Wins in Marketers' 09 Plans

[MarketingDaily](#) has reported that marketers are directing their 2009 budgets toward content, custom media and social media initiatives, according to a new study from online marketing resource and vendor-matching tool Junta42. More than half — 56 percent — of marketing and publishing decision-makers plan to increase their content marketing spending next year, Junta42 found after surveying its community of corporate marketers and publishing/agency professionals. What's more, a full 31 percent expressed their intention to increase spending on content significantly, while 25 percent said they planned to increase it slightly. Even in the face of dramatic cutbacks and decreased budgets, only 4 percent of respondents said they planned to decrease spending on content dramatically next year, while 9 percent said they planned to decrease it slightly. "These findings are an acceleration of what we've been seeing for the past few years," said Joe Pulizzi, founder of Junta42 and author of *Get Content. Get Customers.* More than half—56 percent--of marketing and publishing decision-makers plan to increase their content marketing spending next year, Junta42 found after surveying its community of corporate marketers and publishing/agency professionals. Notably, surveyed marketers were very clear that social media will be at the top of their investment list next year.

Southwest Airlines Adds Cities, Courts Business Travelers

Southwest Airlines CEO Gary Kelly maintains that internal research shows Southwest is already No. 1 in domestic business travel, and he is steering Southwest to capture even more of the business-travel market in 2009. To accomplish that, he's doing some heavy tinkering with a business model that has kept the airline profitable for an unprecedented 35 consecutive years. It's risky, says [USA Today](#), but in a deepening recession, it may be less risky than standing pat. Southwest will shrink overall next year — the first time it's ever done that — but the nation's largest low-fare airline will also expand aggressively in some big business markets because that's where the most profitable travelers are.

Two new airports are already on the agenda: Minneapolis-St. Paul in March and, at a still-to-be-determined date, New York's LaGuardia, which will host Southwest's first flights at any of the three major New York metro airports. Kelly this month said he wants to launch service in a third big market in 2009. Southwest is also set to increase service on heavy business-travel routes to and from airports such as Chicago Midway, Denver, Los Angeles and Nashville. Meanwhile, other important changes have come or are in the works.

Airport gates have been updated with business-traveler-friendly features such as laptop workstations. It still doesn't assign seats, but Southwest's formerly chaotic boarding process has been changed to move its best customers and those willing to pay a higher fare to the front of the line so they get first choice of seats. Less noticeable, but just as important, Southwest last year began using a sophisticated computer system that enables it to offer up to 15 different fares. The

old system, in use for 20 years, offered as few as three fares on many routes. The new pricing system enables Southwest to boost its total revenue without resorting to huge across-the-board price increases. Similarly, a new flight-scheduling system that Southwest began using earlier this year is allowing it to better match capacity to demand. It gradually is reducing flight frequencies on lower-demand routes and adding flights on more-lucrative, heavy-demand business-travel routes. Those new pricing and schedule-planning systems will be seriously tested in 2009 and beyond as Southwest increasingly challenges conventional competitors in new and larger markets.

Study: Internet Tops Newspapers as News Source

The Internet is now the most popular source of news after TV, according to the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, which released its year-end roundup of news media consumption last week. While TV is still king of the hill, reports [OnlineMediaDaily](#), its steady decline in the face of Internet competition bodes ill in the long term. In 2008, 40 percent of the respondents said they got most of their national and international news from the Internet, versus 35 percent for newspapers in 2008. The Internet's share is up from 24 percent in 2007, while newspapers also increased slightly, from 34 percent. The long-term trend is even clearer: the Internet's share has more than tripled from 13 percent in 2001, while newspapers fell by almost a quarter--from 45 percent in those six years. (The figures add up to more than 100 percent because Pew accepted multiple responses to account for ambiguity in its survey of 1,489 adults from Dec. 3-7. Although Pew did not explain this ambiguity, it might include respondents citing online newspapers or TV news Web sites alongside the traditional medium itself). Although print newspapers--especially big metro dailies--appear to be locked in an irreversible long-term decline, newspaper Web sites have had big increases in audiences. In October 2008, the last month for which data is available, newspaper Web sites attracted a total of 68.97 million unique visitors--up 64 percent from 41.96 million in October 2004. The October 2008 figure represents 42 percent of the American adult Internet-using population--up from 28 percent in October 2004.

Car Rental Companies Raise Rates, Cut Workers to Keep Up

To many frequent renters, it's obvious that the economic slump has hit the car rental industry. Business travelers say they're receiving cars with more miles on their odometers and less maintenance. They also say rates are rising, and there's less staff to handle check-in and checkout. With fewer renters, rental car companies are eliminating jobs and closing some off-airport rental locations. "These are troubling times in the industry," says Chris Brown, managing editor of trade publication Auto Rental News.

- Avis Budget Group this month eliminated 2,200 jobs — about 7 percent of its employees — to help reduce costs \$150 million to \$200 million annually. Hertz says it laid off 2,000 workers this year, and Dollar Thrifty, Enterprise, National and Alamo also reduced their workforces in recent months.
- Hertz reported that net income dropped 94 percent to \$63 million during the first nine months this year. There also was a 2 percent drop in the number of days its cars were rented.
- Advantage Rent A Car, which bills itself as "one of America's fastest-growing car rental companies," announced on Dec. 8 that it filed for bankruptcy reorganization in federal bankruptcy court. The company also said that rentals are no longer available at most of its 48 U.S. locations.
- A Standard & Poor's research report released in late November said Dollar Thrifty "appears to be the most likely" of the big rental companies to file for protection from creditors in bankruptcy court. A Dollar Thrifty bankruptcy filing "might even result in a liquidation," the report said.

- Dollar Thrifty declined to comment.

Rental car consultants and analysts tell [USA Today](#) that they don't expect any of the big brands to disappear. "It's not likely to happen," says John Healy of FTN Midwest Securities.

Trend: Restaurants Focus on Kids, Local and Green

Restaurants have an overflowing plate of objectives for 2009. In addition to a core focus on delivering ever more value and convenience, they will be expanding healthy kids' meals, locally sourced menu options and sustainability initiatives, according to National Restaurant Association survey findings included in the association's 2009 industry forecast. Quick-serve operators ranked healthy kids' meal options as the top food trend in their segment for 2009. In a separate "what's hot" survey of more than 1,600 American Culinary Federation member chefs, nutritionally balanced children's dishes came in fourth among the 200-plus culinary items listed, and fruit/vegetable side items for kids ranked sixth. Adults also want healthier options, of course. In the association's consumer surveys, three in four adults said that compared to two years ago, they are more focused now on trying to eat healthier at restaurants. Nearly three in 10 (27 percent) said they have gone online to search for nutrition information about restaurant food--up from 24 percent a year ago according to [MarketingDaily](#).

Calendar of Events

Visit www.ArizonaGuide.com to find information on all the exciting [events, festivals and activities](#) held throughout the Grand Canyon State!